(22)

The Confusion about Life and Death.

Ever since it became known that Shri Maharaj has been suffering from cancer of the throat, people have been coming to see him – people who would otherwise not have bothered to do so, people who used to call on him when they had some problems and then conveniently found it inconvenient to do so after the problems had disappeared. Shri Maharaj is quite aware of this human trait and treats it in his usual casual and kindly manner. He might, for instance, say to one such visiting family: "what brings you here today? no fresh problems I hope? I know what it is: you heard that the old man is not at all well and you decided that you might as well have a 'darshan' before he makes his exit!" all this is in such good humour that the visitors are flabbergasted – they had expected a sick old man who would bitterly berate them for not visiting him regularly, and here was Shri Maharaj in his usual cheerful self totally ignoring a disease which would have completely unnerved even those who considered themselves to be 'dnyaanis'.

Occasionally there are visitors who actually express their astonishment that Shri Maharaj, admittedly a dnyaani, should be so very imperious to such an extremely painful disease which in most cases means a death sentence.

Shri Maharaj patiently explains: "If only you would perceive the position as it really is, you too would not be concerned about life and death. Indeed there is no difference at all between life and death. Were you not 'dead' before you were born?! What is darkness other than absence of light? and even the word is only a concept to indicate such absence. What is death other than absence of life; – and is not 'life' merely the absence of death? 'Life' begins as an image in consciousness, and when the image ceases, we call it 'death'!

Shri Maharaj continues: The basic cause of the confusion is the mistaken belief that there is an entity, an objective entity, to experience these happenings called 'birth' and 'death' and the duration between these two called 'life'. All these are conceptual images in consciousness which have as much substance as any images on the T.V. screen or any mirage or a dream.

So try to understand what phenomena are; all phenomena: they are only appearances in consciousness. Who perceives them? The consciousness itself, through the mechanism of the twin concepts of space and time, without which the appearances would not have a perceivable form and could not be cognised; and the cognition itself takes place through the division of the mind into (mind is the content of consciousness) into subject and object and the duality of the inter-dependent opposites - long and short, fast and slow, likes and dislikes etc.

Once this process is appreciated, it has to be understood that there can be no factual individual to be born, to live or to die. There is a manifestation, an appearance in consciousness, generally known as 'living' - an illusion in space. When this manifested appearance goes through its temporal span, there occurs the illusion of temporal illusion in temporality that is known as 'dying'. This simple process cannot be appreciated unless one stays away from so long as one persists in the notion of a 'liver' of a life and the "die-er" of a death.

Shri Maharaj concludes: That 'material' or 'chemical' which was conceived in the mother's womb and which spontaneously grew into the body of the baby, grows itself to its limit and finally decays into the original 'material', breath leaves the body and mixes with the air outside, and the consciousness within merges with the universal consciousness. The process of the 'happening' is over. What-we-are is neither 'born', nor 'lives', nor 'dies'.